Blueprint for Law Enforcement Recruitment
and Retention in the 21st Century:

*Principles of a Comprehensive Recruitment,
Hiring, Promotion, and Retention Strategy*

Christopher Sun
Jessica Dockstader
James R. "Chip" Coldren, Jr.
Hildy Saizow
Quin Patterson

Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice

SMART POLICING | Data. Analysis. Impact.

CNA ANALYSIS & SOLUTIONS

Preface

Over the course of its service to the law enforcement community, the Bureau of Justice Assistance's Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) has provided thought-provoking and soundly researched products and advice regarding the practice and administration of policing in America. This service is grounded in the principles of collaboration, creative thinking, utilization of data and technology, strategic focus on high-impact problems and solutions, sustainable practices, and integration of research partners into the world of policing. This publication builds on these SPI principles to examine the important issue of recruitment and retention in law enforcement.

SPI reaches out to its network of law enforcement partners and researchers to stimulate thinking and action in response to the pressing and persistent challenges facing agencies on this topic. True to form, our collaboration on this issue produced timely, thoughtful, innovative, and forward-thinking approaches. You will find them in the pages that follow. We hope and trust that you find this information helpful, and we encourage you to contact us with your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions regarding recruitment and retention issues in American policing and regarding other challenges and opportunities that will benefit from collaborations like this one.

Dr. James R. "Chip" Coldren, Jr. and
Mr. Christopher M. Sun
Co-directors, SPI Training and
Technical Assistance Team

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Introduction

Law enforcement agencies across the country and the communities they serve have confronted extraordinary changes and challenges over the last several years. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, high levels of street violence, and widespread erosion of trust in law enforcement brought on by several high-profile killings of civilians by police officers, police agencies continue to experience high attrition rates as well as drastic downturns in the number of police officer recruits. The field must confront the drivers of this crisis with innovative approaches and dedicated resources. But where to start?

Our greatest resource is the policing field itself. Specifically, we can turn to agencies that are currently pursuing unconventional and innovative solutions to recruitment and retention of officers while simultaneously delivering on their promise of improved public safety, reduced crime, and improved quality of life for officers and the community members they serve.

In addition, communities across the country are re-envisioning how law enforcement agencies address public safety needs, including first responses to situations such as mental health crises, drug overdoses, and other noncriminal calls for service. It is imperative that agencies take advantage of this changing landscape and reflect on how identifying, recruiting, selecting, retaining, and supporting a different profile of recruits and officers can serve the current staffing needs of the agency as well as emerging needs and expectations of the community. Taking the changing expectations and emerging priorities in policing seriously will encourage the development of important guidance regarding how to effectively address current recruitment and retention challenges.

Roadmap for this Publication

Each law enforcement agency brings its own history, set of circumstances, previous and current initiatives, and organizational culture related to recruitment and retention issues. Some agencies have dedicated significant time and resources to identifying and addressing these issues. Other agencies may be just beginning to make recruitment and retention issues a priority. Regardless of where your agency currently lies on this spectrum, this publication is not designed to be a one-size-fits-all approach to how law enforcement agencies should address these issues. Instead, this publication provides a comprehensive framework informed by research, data, and examples of thoughtful action in the field to guide discussions in your agency about these important topics.

To develop the Blueprint, CNA brought agencies and experts in the field together to examine some of the key issues facing law enforcement agencies. In addition to contemporary best practice and research on recruitment and retention issues, this Blueprint is also based on proceedings from a Bureau of Justice Assistance-sponsored Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) Recruitment and Retention Event in March 2022. Over 70 individuals from 40 agencies across the country discussed their experiences with and recommendations for addressing issues in recruitment and retention. Attendees also included practitioners, researchers, and policymakers. Lastly, CNA examined and integrated concepts from "Executive Order on Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety"[1] as well as Department of Justice consent decrees for law enforcement agencies as they relate to recruitment and retention issues, which have become a recent focus of consent decrees.[2] Collectively, these sources provide a comprehensive perspective on contemporary recruitment and retention issues and offer data-driven directions for future action.

Setting the Context

Law enforcement agencies have experienced challenges with recruitment and retention of quality officers over the years. Agencies periodically experience departures and retirements within the organization for a variety of reasons, including leadership transition, variations in officer recruit class sizes, and ebbs and flows of local budgets. However, over the last 2 years, global and law enforcement-specific circumstances have exacerbated underlying challenges for law enforcement agencies to recruit and retain officers. This section discusses some of the major circumstances contributing to the current recruitment and retention crisis facing agencies across the country.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Law Enforcement. The world is still in the midst of a global pandemic related to the COVID-19 virus. While there are signs of returning to normal operations in many agencies, 2 years of strained staffing assignments from agency quarantine procedures for exposure or infection, significant use of overtime, and limited ability to interact with the community have contributed to reduced officer morale for a sustained amount of time.[3]

In addition, court systems in many jurisdictions shut down completely in early 2020 as a result of the pandemic. This created significant delays in prosecution of cases, which resulted in the need to prioritize the cases that law enforcement agencies developed for prosecution. Many agencies began focusing only on people who committed violent crimes and other high-profile criminal activities, which has impacted the strategies and approaches that law enforcement utilizes in their communities.

Impact of Social Unrest and Protest of the Policing Field. In the spring and summer of 2020multiple high profile police involved killings of unarmed citizens resulted in significant protests across the country related to policing in America, with racial bias and lack of transparency/accountability as key public concerns regarding law enforcement agencies.[4] While these unfortunate events have spurred a new wave of policing reform, these events have also had an impact on law enforcement agencies' ability to recruit and retain officers. Potential recruits are not applying to the academy because of poor perceptions of the policing field, and officers are leaving the field because of burnout and additional stress related to these perceptions and on-the-job responsibilities during this period.[5]

This particular circumstance also highlights the need for many agencies to rethink recruitment and retention practices and policies with a focus on agency values such as transparency, community empowerment, and accountability.

Changing Roles and Expectations for First Responders. Police agencies are routinely the first responders in calls for service (CFS) for a jurisdiction. While many agencies provide interdisciplinary training for CFS that range from domestic disturbances to suspicious activity, not all agencies provide officers with training in CFS regarding behavioral health crises or connections to social supports when responding to calls. The result: a disproportionate number of these calls result in officer-involved shootings.[6] As the public continues to stress the importance of service-oriented officers in their communities, many agencies are looking toward co-responder models for behavioral health CFS, in which licensed clinicians or mental health providers respond with officers to CFS, to ensure that appropriate law enforcement and mental health expertise is on site during crisis situations. Enforcing local and state laws and codes is just one aspect of an officer's expected role. Many agencies are examining how to recruit and retain service-oriented officers that reflect agency values and the communities they support to improve outcomes for officers and communities.

Vision and Principles for 21ˢᵗ-Century Law Enforcement Recruitment and Retention

While the circumstances noted above have contributed to a reduction in recruits and significant numbers of departures or retirements in many departments, some agencies have made significant strides to address these challenges and create an effective system to recruit and retain officers. In addition, contemporary research in the field illustrates data-driven approaches that are making a difference on several fronts related to recruitment and retention. Together, these actions and evidence point to four primary principles that law enforcement agencies need to consider regarding recruitment and retention issues (see figure 1).Realizing these principles requires a comprehensive approach across an agency that starts with recruitment, persists through candidate selection, continues during evaluation and promotion processes, and reinforces officer wellness throughout. For example, the March

Figure 1. Elements of a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy

Effective and Equitable Approaches to Expand the Pool of Officer Candidates

Agency recruitment practices need to proactively engage with and attract candidates who are representative of the communities that the agency serves.

Identification of the Best Candidates During Screening and Selection

Selection processes should ensure agencies broadly identify candidates that have the important traits and qualities needed to be a successful and productive officer while also effectively screening out undesirable individuals.

Retention of Officers who Reflect the Values of the Agency and Community with Accountability and Promotion Processes

Agencies need to systematically train, support, and promote officers that reflect the core values of an agency and the community it supports.

Development of Officer Wellness Systems to Better Serve Officers and Communities

Agencies need proactive supports and early interventions available to and utilized by officers to not only ensure officer wellness and optimal performance in the field and officer wellness but also reduce the likelihood of leaving the field

2022 Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) convening on this topic identified some of the prerequisite systems and approaches needed to execute this vision for recruitment and retention. They included:

- **A Robust Recruitment Strategy:** Agencies need to develop recruitment materials that are tailored to target communities that the agency wants to engage and recruit. The strategy needs to include not only the strategies to employ during recruitment but also the measures for successful efforts in terms of reach, participation, and representation.

- **Articulation of the Values and Qualities an Agency Expects from Its Officers:** Agencies need to identify characteristics and traits of officers that reflect core values of the agency and the community it serves and implement screening processes to select candidates with these characteristics and traits during the hiring process.

- **Recruitment and Retention Data Systems with Regular Feedback Points:** Agencies need to be utilizing data and analysis to understand agency staffing trends, available support systems, policies, and challenges that currently exist in the officer recruitment and retention pipeline. In addition, agencies should analyze this data annually to identify whether any disparities, including racial, ethnic, or gender-based, exist at each stage of the hiring and promotion process. If such disparities are identified, the agency should investigate the root causes and, if possible, implement programs to ameliorate those disparities.

- **Implementation of Officer Wellness Programs and Early Intervention Strategies:** Agencies need to identify, address, and mitigate routine and acute stresses inherent to the law enforcement field, such as trauma from their duties, substance use disorders, or mental health issues. This may include assessing the physical and psychological needs of officers within an agency regularly, developing and enhancing peer supports, and incentivizing physical and emotional fitness and wellness in agencies.

Potential Impact of a Comprehensive Recruitment and Retention Strategy

The stakes are high for agencies seeking to improve recruitment and retention practices. However, the potential payoff is equally high. For example, Chief Murphy Paul of the Baton Rouge Police Department in Louisiana concluded his keynote for the March 2022 convening with the optimism that his agency and community, as well as those from across the country, have an opportunity to create lasting change in the policing profession if we can harness effective, evidence-based strategies that build greater bonds between agencies and the communities they serve. He emphasized that larger, more qualified, more diverse applicant pools; a reduction in officer attrition and increased officer satisfaction; increased transparency, trust, and connections with the community; and improved public safety outcomes are all long-term goals of these efforts and are much needed in the policing field.

Comprehensive recruitment and retention programs that focus on community engagement, diversity, and officer wellness helped (our department) build trust within the community and address challenges in our agency.

These programs work when we change the perception of law enforcement in our communities.

We've had more diversity in our academy classes than we've ever had before. 80% minority representation in last year's academy class.

**CHIEF MURPHY PAUL,
BATON ROUGE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

How to Use the Blueprint

The Blueprint provides perspective on the key issues relating to recruitment and retention aligned with the four elements of a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy mentioned above. In doing so, the guide is meant to begin or continue informed conversations about recruitment and retention in your agency. The Blueprint is a starting point for developing a comprehensive approach to recruitment and retention for law enforcement agencies. The ideal is to create an interrelated system among recruitment, screening, officer accountability and promotion, and officer wellness that integrates agency goals and community values to improve outcomes within the agency and on the streets.

In addition, while this Blueprint represents some of the best and current insights, promising practices, and research on this topic, there is significantly more work to be done in this area regarding evaluating and identifying effective strategies on recruitment and retention in law enforcement agencies. A key challenge on this topic is that there is a dearth of rigorously evaluated practices.

To that end and to make best use of the Blueprint, it is vital to understand what kinds of data are available in your agency regarding recruitment, screening, officer accountability and promotion, and officer wellness. These data will not only inform discussions on outcomes related to recruitment and retention, but also the approaches mentioned throughout the Blueprint. These data, provided on a regular basis, help an agency understand how and why outcomes are occurring and where they are experiencing the most challenges or successes.

The Blueprint discusses innovative and promising practices related to recruitment and retention specific to each of the four principles noted above and to the kinds of institutional processes, procedures, and data systems needed to create and sustain meaningful change. Central to all of these issues is an agency's regular review of and reflection on the outcomes and circumstances contributing to the successes or challenges related to recruitment and retention.

Principle 1
Effective and Equitable Approaches to Expand the Pool of Officer Candidates

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices are key to expanding candidate pools for new police recruits. Three factors are currently contributing to the lack of diversity in the candidate pool. First, there is a need to bring more women into law enforcement. Women represent roughly half the U.S. population but currently make up only 12 percent of sworn officers and 3 percent of police leadership.[7] The second reason is that Generation Z, the youngest members of the workforce and one that departments must recruit for the future, place a high value on DEI. The third reason involves the changing composition of the communities that police departments serve; however, represent less than a quarter of officers in the field come from communities of color. Generally speaking, communities are becoming more diverse than

ever, with many comprised of multiple cultures—particularly in large cities, raising the expectation that departments will reflect this diversity in their workforce. However, currently only about one quarter of officers come from communities of color.[8] Collectively, these factors are contributing to agencies having more challenges when recruiting

for potential officers and having those officers reflect the diverse communities they serve. A number of factors impact an agency's ability to recruit a diverse officer candidate pool, such as an agency's commitment to community policing principles, agency size, and Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) accreditation level.[9] These factors impact agencies' willingness to recruit women and people of color as officer candidates. As a result, it is important that agencies assess their diversity recruitment efforts in the context of perceptions and barriers that exist within the agency and the community. These pre-existing attitudes can serve as strong barriers to efforts to build a more diverse and representative agency.

Social science research suggests the advancement of women officers and more diverse agencies are associated with improved outcomes for both policing agencies and the communities they serve. In fact, the research illustrates that diverse officers, including women and individuals of color:

- Use less force and less excessive force.
- Are named in fewer complaints and lawsuits.
- Are perceived by communities as more honest and compassionate.
- See better outcomes for crime victims, especially in sexual assault cases.
- Make fewer discretionary arrests, especially of non-white residents.[10]

INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

Address Gaps in The Recruitment Process. Identify potential barriers in the recruitment process and re-align strategies, market your department's DEI initiatives, prioritize the recruitment of women, recognize the impact of the pandemic and the street protests of 2020 on recruitment, and understand the importance of knowing your communities and having cultural

INCREASING REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLICING: THE 30X30 INITIATIVE

As agencies work toward better representation in their officer ranks, the 30x30 Initiative has a goal of increasing the representation of women in recruit classes to 30 percent by the year 2030.

Over 200 agencies from across the country, including Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) in California and New York Police Department in New York City, have signed on to the 30x30 Initiative. In doing so, they have pledged to take the following data-driven actions regarding representation of women in their agencies:
• Understand the current state of a department regarding gender equity.
• Understand factors that may be driving disparities.
• Develop and implement strategies and solutions to advance women in policing.

These actions not only help work toward the goal of better representation within an agency, but also provide agencies with key data on potential recruitment patterns and the possible organizational contexts that contribute to these patterns.

For more information on the 30x30 Initiative and the actions an agency can take to begin to understand and address representation of women in their agency, visit https://30x30initiative.org/

knowledge. Collect input from women officers and officers of color on their recruitment experiences and beginning a career as an officer. As agencies work on these topics, these officers can serve as champions within your organization and they can inform and advance these efforts.

Lack Of Women in Police Leadership Reflects on Organizational Culture. Women represent only 3 percent of police leadership across the U.S. Women often wait until they check every box concerning their accomplishments before trying for a promotion whereas men will try with fewer accomplishments completed. Police agencies should support and encourage women to try for advancement earlier in their careers.

Higher Attrition Rates for Women in Policing Should be Addressed. When LAPD experienced a 30 percent attrition rate among women during recruit training, the Department did some research. It found the biggest problem area to be firearms training. So, the Department created a pilot program that assisted the new recruit officers in this area both before and during the academy. Research indicates that other promising practices to lower high attrition rates for women include

mentoring, sponsorship, support networks, and strengthening and enforcing harassment policies.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

Understand Your Community. Assess the community your department serves to understand the population's diversity and the community's expectations for the police department. Identify ways for the community to help with recruitment and make the hiring process transparent to community members.

Gather data on Trends in Recruitment Practices and Demographics of Candidate Applicants. Agencies should implement a system or database to track applications and applicant progress through the hiring process and analyze this data annually to identify racial, ethnic, or gender-based disparities at each stage of the hiring process. Agencies should also use these systems to inform recruiting practices by understanding the strategies and engaged communities during recruitment campaigns. If such disparities are identified in recruitment practices or in the pool of candidates that apply, the agency should investigate the root causes and, if possible, implement programs to ameliorate those disparities.

Portray Policing Accurately in Recruitment Materials. Social media, popular television shows and movies, and some agency recruiting materials focus on stylized enforcement and paramilitary aspects of officer activities. However, many people are less familiar with officers' day-to-day interactions with the community and problem-solving activities. As a result, agencies should consider recruitment campaigns that accurately portray the reality of police work.[11]

Address DEI in Your Department. It is important for communities to see that their police departments are addressing DEI and making changes, particularly in the post George Floyd era. To begin addressing DEI, **LAPD** undertook several initiatives and implemented an equity and inclusion policy, increased accessibility to maternity uniforms and lactation rooms, provided an option for lactating employees to qualify with lead-free ammunition for firearms qualification mandates for sworn personnel, instituted a workplace equity policy, and assigned a high-ranking DEI officer. These efforts were to address underlying barriers to entry for potential officers. These efforts have resulted in greater diversity in the officer candidate pool and an increased number of women and individuals of color serving on the force.

Provide Support for Retaining Women Officers. Creating a formalized leadership and mentoring program for underrepresented women police officers is one way to provide support. Systematic internal assessments of why women are leaving departments, conversations with patrol staff about causes of the problem, creation of policies that enable women to balance work and family life, and

Charleston Police Department - No Better Time Than Now

EVIDENCE-BASED RECRUITMENT VIDEO: CHARLESTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

The **Charleston Police Department** in South Carolina partnered with researchers at Clemson University and the University of South Carolina to develop an evidence-based recruitment video. The researchers conducted an experiment examining the impact of recruiting materials on criminal justice students' willingness to become police officers, and specifically their willingness to become police officers at the Charleston Police Department. Researchers analyzed the results and used them to build the recruitment video's storyline across the backdrop of Charleston while highlighting various aspects of policing roles within the Department. More information on the partnership is available underline here, and the video is available underline here.

promotion of women into positions of leadership may also increase retention among women officers.

Consider Ways to Attract Recruits from a Range of Backgrounds, Demographics, and Other Professions. Police agencies must re-align strategies to attract a workforce that reflects the values and composition of the communities they serve. Diversity is more than the number of officers that represent specific demographics such as race, ethnicity, age, and gender. Recruiting strategies should generally reflect the various communities that an agency serves. However, diversity can and should also include nontraditional perspectives in law enforcement, such as individuals that enter the field from other professions.

Some police agencies, including the **Sturgis Police Department in Michigan,** have looked to other public health and safety professions such as social

work and emergency management to recruit potential officers. The varying perspectives these professionals bring can help show an agency's commitment to diversity as a comprehensive and continuous idea of community safety rather than a singular activity to be completed and never revisited. In addition, having these perspectives within an agency can reinforce an agency's commitment to officer service and effective engagement with community members.

By considering these factors, police departments can evolve and change to attract and meet the needs of their future workforce and illustrate to the community the changing roles and expectations of a police officer.

Principle 2
Identification of the Best Candidates During Screening and Selection

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

Law enforcement agencies not only need to find an appropriate quantity of candidates for their agency, they also need to find the right officers that reflect the values of their agency. In 2020, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) found that 78 percent of agencies struggled to recruit qualified candidates, with 75 percent reporting that recruiting is more difficult than 5 years ago, and 65 percent expressing that they had too few candidates applying to be law enforcement officers.[12] Facing both a smaller pool of applicants and a limited number of applicants from this pool who measured up to their standards, identifying the best candidates early in the process has become more pressing for agencies. Smaller pools of candidates may lower the chance of a diverse hiring group, which may have implications for addressing larger challenges within policing.

Agencies, advocates, and scholars have been looking for ways to make policing outcomes more equitable for generations. One of the most frequently offered solutions has been to make police forces more diverse. Notably, some of the barriers to increasing diversity in an agency are outdated screening and selection processes.[13] As Dr. Michael White noted in the March 2022 convening, agencies typically "screen out" rather than "screen in," and their efforts would be better focused by targeting the ideal qualities in an officer such as communication skills, integrity, honesty, discipline, time management, customer service, crisis management, and flexibility (figure 2).

Barriers and challenges remain for women and racial and ethnic minorities that particularly affect a potential applicant's desire to pursue a career in policing and progress through the hiring process. The "Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing" (2015) identified similar issues in recruitment and selection of police officers, including a recommendation that agencies create a workforce that has a broad range of

Figure 2. Screening out vs. screening in candidates

Typical Agency Processes "Screen Out" Applicants with:	Characteristics that Agencies Can Proactively "Screen In" include:
• Prior criminal history	• Integrity
• Prior drug use	• Compassion
• Financial problems	• Work ethic
• Poor prior employment	• Communication skills
• Questionable morality/trustworthiness	• Honesty
• Evidence of bias/prejudice	• Courage
• Mental health problems	• Physical fitness
• Physical health issues	• Humility

Source: Terpstra, Brice, White, Michael D., & Fradella Henry F. (2022). Finding good cops: The foundations of a screen-in (not out) hiring process for police. Policing: An International Journal. 45(4), 676-692.

diversity.[14] With that in mind, agencies must assess how their current hiring standards or practices create these barriers, and how they can instead provide a lane for a more diverse pool of quality applicants.

INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

Screening Processes for Applicants are at Times Illogical, Rigid, Or Biased. In agencies experiencing recruitment and retention challenges, one problem that can arise is the use of outdated screening processes. While extensive background assessment protocols and methodologies have been developed for predicting job outcome with law enforcement officers, vital contributions from metrics as simple as base rates (BRs) are often overlooked in police psychology.[15] Meehl and Rosen (1955) asserted that BRs are often not used simply because researchers do not report them in their findings or they fail to appreciate their profound influence on diagnostic accuracy. Developing police-specific norms and BRs for specific demographic markers may enhance overall effectiveness in police psychology research and personnel selection.[16] Meehl and Rosen found that basic abilities, sex, sponsorship, and body mass index were related to graduation for the overall sample. For sponsored (law enforcement-funded) recruits, prior job termination and age curtailed graduation chances. For non-sponsored recruits, higher basic abilities test scores corresponded to increased graduation potential, while increased body mass index reduced the likelihood of graduation. Analyses of non-graduates' rationalizations revealed that sponsored recruits often reported health reasons for withdrawals. Non-sponsored recruits' statements contained more incongruences between rationalizations and performances.[17]

Dayton, Texas—Proactive Recruiting: Traditionally, the recruiters of the Dayton Police Department (DPD) required applicants to come to them, rather than actively seeking out potential applicants. The DPD now has a dedicated team that visits local colleges and develops relationships with advisors, not just in criminal justice departments but also in the business,

psychology, and humanities departments and in any other program that the college offers that can be applicable to law enforcement work. They set up recruiting tables on campuses and staff them with the Department's rank-and-file officers so that prospective applicants can speak to the people that they would work with, not just those that they would work for.[18]

Chicago, Illinois—Changing College Requirement to be an Officer: The Chicago Police Department (CPD) altered its hiring standards for college education amid staffing shortages, which led to a spike in applicants. After CPD announced that the Department would waive a college credit requirement for some recruits, 400 candidates applied that same day, and the Department has continued to experience spikes in numbers of applicants since. CPD Superintendent David Brown announced that the Department would waive a college credit requirement for recruits who have 2 years of military or peace officer experience or 3 years in corrections, social services, health care, trades, or education. Under the old policy, those candidates were required to have 60 hours of college credits.

As agencies consider altering requirements for recruits, it is important to weigh the impact of these changes along multiple variables such as demographics, representation, candidate quality, candidate pool size, and any state requirements for

officers that may exist. Agencies will need to identify the best balance of all these factors when considering large-scale changes to these requirements.

Consider How the Length of the Hiring Process Impacts Attrition in the System. In agencies experiencing recruitment and retention challenges, one problem that can arise is the burdensome length of the hiring process.

Arlington, Texas—Virtual Recruitment:[19] The COVID-19 pandemic forced the Arlington Police Department (APD) to explore digital recruitment avenues and techniques outside of its traditional recruitment strategies. To accommodate interviewees from areas outside of the region, APD began conducting "virtual" preliminary interviews, which allows the agency to interview candidates from a distance first, saving them the cost of a trip to headquarters. If candidates advance to the next phase, APD coordinates their physical evaluations with their other medical, psychological, and polygraph evaluations. The Department credits this practice with improving its ability to sustain recruitment outcomes that might have otherwise suffered because of the limitations on in-person contact by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, this practice shortens the length of the hiring process.

Spokane, Washington— "Hire-ahead" Positions: The Spokane City Council authorized 10 new "hire-ahead" positions for the Spokane Police Department (SPD). Becoming a Spokane police officer can take between 6 months and a year from the time candidates take a public safety test until they are trained, according to SPD. Aiming to start that process sooner during periods when the Department is fully staffed, the Department is getting 10 new "hire-ahead" positions to prepare for any anticipated departures, such as retirements. Without these positions, SPD— unable to hire above its authorized staffing level of 356 commissioned police officers—previously had to wait for vacancies to open before hiring.[20]

Across agencies, differences in job qualifications such as personal appearance, fitness, age and degree requirements, and prior drug use impact candidate pools. In agencies experiencing recruitment and retention challenges, differences in job qualifications such as restrictions on officer tattoos, degree requirements, and previous use of marijuana can create problems. In the hiring phase, this can negatively impact the chances for candidates who have tattoos or histories of minor drug use or who do not meet educational requirements. Agencies must be ready to address and refine the qualifications by which they screen applicants.[21] Several nationwide think tanks, including CNA, RAND,[22] and Police Executive Research Forum (PERF),[23] have discussed the removal of tattoo restrictions, with specific exceptions for tattoos that are extremist-related or with a certain body placement (e.g., on the face). Officers have noted that they felt pride in their tattoos, that their tattoos helped them to build rapport with the community, and that the current policy requiring officers to cover all tattoos is outdated.[24] This recommendation would serve to not only enhance recruitment efforts but would also bolster retention efforts because officers with tattoos have reported this as an organizational stressor.[25]

Austin, Texas—National Tattoo Day Recruitment Opportunity: As law enforcement agencies across the country have struggled with staffing issues, many departments have loosened their tattoo policies.[25] One agency, Austin Police Department in Texas, took advantage of National Tattoo Day in their jurisdiction to recruit potential officers.[27] Austin Police Department includes officers with tattoos in their marketing materials and answers to tattoo-related questions in their "Frequently Asked Questions" section on their recruiting website.[28]

New Jersey—Decriminalization: According to a memo issued by the New Jersey Attorney General,[29] off-duty officers over 21 can now consume marijuana in accordance with state law.

Understand the Candidate Pool you are Focusing on When Developing Advertising and Marketing Materials. One problem that can arise is the misuse of advertising materials to attract applicants who focus more on enforcement rather than community service. For example, agencies sometimes produce materials that focus on "warrior"-oriented roles and tasks, such as fighting violent crime, and do not reflect the "guardian" nature of the work, such as creating and strengthening community relationships. As a result, these materials might inhibit recruitment of quality candidates that have a community-focused approach to law enforcement while also drawing applicants who do not reflect the agency's values.

Madison, Wisconsin—Inclusive Recruiting Content: Madison Police Department created the "We are the 28,"[30] an agency-led initiative signifying the 28 percent of female representation in their agency, in fall 2019.[31] This initiative continued the conversation about female officers in law enforcement by looking deliberately at the agency's culture and using that as a starting point for recruitment and for efforts to retain officers in the field.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

Develop Tailored and Equitable Recruitment Content and Approaches to Attract and Expand the Pool of Diverse and Appropriate Applicants. Agencies must tailor their recruitment marketing strategies to the communities they are looking to attract. Across the country, agencies are launching marketing campaigns to recruit officers, but it is critical that these campaigns are not designed to continue business as usual, but to attract quality candidates with the skill sets of the 21st century police officer. Partnering with a subject matter expert or marketing firm is one important part of executing this strategy. However, agency leadership must be careful to include their communities' voices as well to learn what their community is looking for from their officers and to effectively launch and execute these campaigns. The messaging in these campaigns must also come off as sincere and in touch with the demographics that the agency is looking to recruit.

Consider Screening Procedures that Incorporate Positive Traits and Characteristics for the Job. In a study conducted by Dr. Michael White with the Glendale Police Department (GPD), officers were asked to identify the five most important personality traits, characteristics, and skills they would seek from their applicant pool, in addition to identifying the processes that police departments could use to find people with these hallmarks. Officers in the study suggested that agencies: (1) use mental, physical, and technical fitness tests that are usually reserved for academy training; (2) use dual-purpose processes to screen candidates "in" and "out;" (3) use role-playing scenarios and scenario-based testing to identify traits such as integrity, honesty, compassion, communication, and listening skills; (4) conduct multiple face-to-face interviews that are in-depth and open-ended; and (5) practice proactive recruitment strategies. As mentioned earlier, agencies typically screen "out" instead of screening "in;" adding the "screen in" element helps to incorporate more positive traits into the hiring process rather than the negative traits associated with "screening out" an applicant.

Practice Proactive Recruiting and Intentional Screening to Target the Hallmarks Your Agency is Seeking. Agencies should proactively seek out diverse applicants through partnerships with historically diverse colleges, such as Hispanic-Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs),[32] and create strong community outreach practices.[33] Agencies should also implement a system or database to track applications and applicant progress through the hiring process and analyze this data annually to identify racial, ethnic, or gender-based disparities at each stage of the hiring process. As mentioned earlier, if such disparities are identified, the agency should be thorough in investigating the principal causes of these disparities and take measures to amend them.[34]

Ensure your agency is attracting the right candidates by promoting a positive culture. Attracting members of the community to join a justice system profession that is not known for high salaries or low-stress work environments can be difficult. One way that agencies can work to attract qualified and desired candidates is by exemplifying a procedurally just culture that the applicant will want to work in.

PROMOTING POSITIVE CULTURE WITHIN THE ARLINGTON, TX POLICE DEPARTMENT

While other agencies struggled with recruitment during the COVID-19 pandemic, at the APD numbers increased. The APD believes its culture reflects and integrates the increasingly reform-oriented values of young people, who may previously have been reluctant to apply based on their negative perceptions of the police culture. The APD points to these principles as one of the reasons the department has been able to maintain a positive relationship with its community and a key factor in the recruitment and retention of officers. This anecdotal evidence is further supported by research that indicates individuals considering a career in law enforcement are more likely to apply when presented with recruitment materials that emphasize procedural justice principles.

Sources: Michael Speer, Steve Rickman, & Lt. Brook Rollins, 2021, Succeeding in Recruitment during COVID-19: Three Important Strategies from the Arlington, Texas Police Department, Arlington, VA: CNA, retrieved September 19, 2022 from https://www.cna. org/cna_files/centers/IPR/jri/policing-covid/Recruitment-IIM-2021-U-029238.pdf;[35] Michael F. Aiello, 2021, "Procedural Justice and Demographic Diversity: A Quasi-Experimental Study of Police Recruitment" Police Quarterly, 25(3): 387-411[36]

Principle 3
Retention of Officers who Reflect the Values of the Agency and Community with Accountability and Promotion Processes

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

Maintaining quality officers who reflect the values of the agency and surrounding community through accountability and performance processes continues to challenge agencies across the country. Community trust in law enforcement improves or declines over time based on interactions with officers, the perceived fairness and transparency of internal investigations, and expectations for community interactions. The exact numbers vary, but it is generally agreed that it takes multiple positive experiences with an individual or agency to outweigh a negative experience. This stresses the importance of agencies developing officers who engage with the community in such a way and frequency that their engagements are seen as fair and positive, quickly overshadowing any negative ones.

Field training officer (FTO) programs, first-line supervision, promotional processes, and performance evaluations all play important roles in the development, progression, and retention of officers. From perceptions of fairness within an agency and in the community regarding officer disciplinary matters to transparency of promotion processes and officer performance evaluations, these systems play a large role in who stays in the field as an officer. As much as officers focus on their procedural fairness within the field, agencies must in their own way show procedural fairness to cultivate a system that their officers view as fair and mutualistic.

These systems reinforce explicit or implicit values through incentivizing or disincentivizing particular behaviors, traits, or expressed values. Intentional or not, these systems play a large role in who gets promoted and who stays in the field by how they first learn how to be an officer. Therefore, it is important to ensure that officers are supported and encouraged to reflect the values of the department and the community regarding procedural fairness,

and agencies must have systems in place to reinforce those ideals. Part of that responsibility falls on FTOs due to their status as a mentor and a model for new recruits.

INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

FTO programs and First-line Supervision Play Key Roles in Officer Development and Retention.
FTOs and front-line supervisors help set the operational tone for an agency. As a result, officers typically learn and model behavior for how to interact with the community based on these supervisors. Research into how supervisory styles influence officer behavior has identified four distinct types of supervisory styles: traditional, innovative, supportive, and active, each with different approaches to policing and providing feedback.[37] Therefore, agencies need to think about how to invest in their training and continue to hold these individuals to a high standard.

FTO programs offer the opportunity to provide new recruits with exemplary policing strategies, approaches, and tactics from those that have been in the field. However, all too often, systems for selecting and training FTOs are outdated and/or ineffective. Many agencies now use an assortment of oral and written exams along with assessment centers to get a more complete picture of FTO candidates and their characteristics.[38]

Promotion/Officer Evaluation Systems.
Part of creating an agency culture that encourages current officers to stay and entices community members to apply involves creating a clear path of progression within the agency. Officers today are more interested in incentives that involve consistent promotional exams or opportunities, encouraging them to stay with the agency long-term[40]. Agencies must make sure that these promotional exams or evaluation systems reflect the agency culture

INTEGRATING AGENCY VALUES INTO EVALUATIONS: TUCSON, ARIZONA

The Tucson Police Department in Arizona has identified 12 core competencies that their sergeants are evaluated on every month during their one-year probationary period. The competencies are as follows:

- Communication and responsiveness
- Community engagement
- Crime reduction/mitigation
- Incident command
- Job knowledge
- Leadership

- Management/direction
- Organizational commitment
- Problem solving
- Self-awareness
- Supervision
- Transitioning from officer to supervisor

Source: Police Executive Research Forum, October 2018, *Promoting Excellence in First-Line Supervision: New Approaches to Selection, Training, and Leadership Development, Critical Issues in Policing, Washington, DC*[39]

they are trying to cultivate, ensuring that those officers that are promoted are good models for that agency. While internal agency and administrator perspectives are important to consider during the promotion and evaluation process, community feedback should also be taken into account.

The **Fayetteville, NC Police Department** utilizes community feedback during the promotional process for sergeants. In addition to a written exam, community members play a role in critical incident scenarios where both executive staff and external assessors from outside the agency provide input into the evaluation of an officer for promotion. In addition, volunteers from community organizations provide feedback in the critical incident assessment.[41]

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

Identify Your Agency's Core Values and Build Upon Those Values Through Evaluation and Promotion Systems. Many agencies develop 3- or 5-year strategic plans that operationalize core values for the agency. These documents can provide a clear vision for your agency in key areas such as community engagement, as well as goals and policing strategies that the agency plans to implement. They can also be used as a reference to track changes in strategic efforts over time as well as efforts that remain consistent.

Build and implement a human resource strategy that fits within your agency. It is important to consider how all of your systems, including recruitment, training, and promotions, play a role in the overall culture your agency is trying to develop or maintain. Performance systems can reflect those values in the performance evaluation criteria, such as community interactions, adherence to policies, self-initiated activities, etc. Figure 3 provides various organizational processes that play a role in encouraging particular behaviors in officers based on feedback they receive during the process.

Figure 3. Incentivizing Agency Values in Organizational Processes
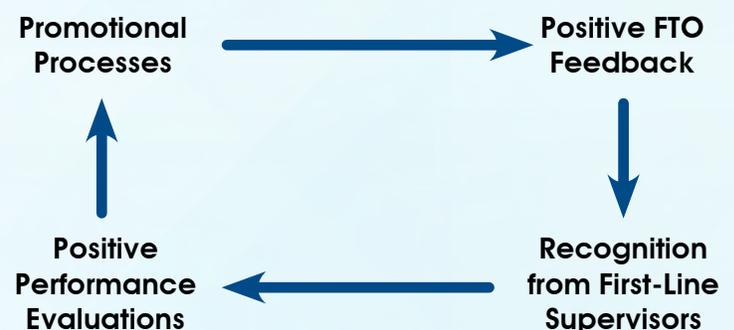
Retain Your Staff by Investing in Systems that Encourage and Promote Best Practices. Performance and training systems should be a part of continuous feedback that command staff and officers receive on a regular basis. These systems can help to identify and assist those in need of support as well as provide regular interactions on job performance. The best evaluation systems include regular feedback to correct potentially problematic behavior while also giving an opportunity to encourage behaviors that the agency would like to see in all of its officers. Highlighting these actions is essential for establishing model behaviors and model officers within an agency. Annual and semi-annual evaluations provide fewer opportunities to give this formative feedback.

Survey Officers About Job Satisfaction and Areas for Improving Recruitment and Retention. Responses from these surveys can identify discrepancies in satisfaction between different types of officers (e.g., rank, education level, age, years of service) and their thoughts on the department's culture. Creating action plans based on these responses can help agencies improve internal culture for current officers and create a more attractive culture for potential applicants.

Principle 4
Development of Officer Wellness Systems To Better Serve Officers and Communities

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

Law enforcement officers experience traumatic events called "critical incidents" throughout their careers. A study conducted by Chopko, Palmieri, and Adams (2015) found that, on average, law enforcement officers experience 188 critical incidents during their careers.[42] In response to critical incidents, officers can develop negative coping mechanisms, experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and develop other co-occurring emotional difficulties. Additionally, factors such as organizational stress, stigma surrounding mental health within the department and in the community, a lack of mental health literacy on the officer's part, the implementation of practices to address trauma that are not evidence-based, and a lack of leadership surrounding mental health in the department can also lead to an officer developing PTSD and using poor coping mechanisms. Research has shown that early intervention systems (EISs), which are intended to help the officer avoid negative behavior, are inappropriately tied to disciplinary and accountability systems or housed under internal affairs units.[43] This practice can undermine the EIS in the eyes of the officers, signaling the intention of using EISs for discipline rather than wellness. Furthermore, despite the clear significance of wellness programming in policing agencies, many agencies do not implement holistic wellness programs across the United States.[44]

Law enforcement departments must adopt best practices and policies relating to officer mental health to improve officer wellness, reduce officer suicides, reduce incidence of substance use disorders in officers, and prevent traumatized officers from causing harm in the communities they serve.

INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

Increase in Perceived Negative Stressors for Being an Officer, Including Burden, Stress, And Physical Safety. Law enforcement officers respond to some of the most unpredictable, traumatic, and violent encounters of any profession. Although much of an officer's workday entails repetitive interactions, some CFS or self-initiated interactions may escalate into emotionally upsetting, violent, or dangerous encounters. Additionally, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, police officers are subjected to a higher risk for exposure and transmission of COVID-19 compared to other professions. This has served as an added stressor to the mental and physical health of officers, specifically regarding the risk of exposure and potential transmission of the disease to their families.

SAN JOSE POLICE DEPARTMENT, CALIFORNIA—FOCUS GROUPS

Through an assessment of the 21st century practices of the San Jose Police Department (SJPD), CNA learned that SJPD chaplains started agency focus groups in July 2021, covering many different subjects, such as police officers' working conditions and community engagement. To encourage open dialogue, the focus groups did not include commanders. SJPD also identified interdepartmental trends that it is working to address. For instance, SJPD found that officers approaching or in retirement face their own unique challenges pertaining to wellness; the Department has held focus groups specifically for these groups as well. The focus groups held by the chaplains were a new initiative, demonstrating that the Department is being proactive and attempting to learn about officers' wellness.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, law enforcement agencies across the country were already facing significant challenges related to mental health and wellness. Agencies were reporting heightened personal safety concerns, job burnout,[45] cumulative post-traumatic stress, and suicide.[46] Officer mental health and wellness received renewed focus and was addressed through a variety of federal funding opportunities and resources. However, some of these efforts were undermined because of the implications of the pandemic, causing additional adverse effects on the mental health of both sworn and civilian police and 911 professionals. In addition to these issues, law enforcement has dealt with a barrage of protests surrounding public health guidelines and matters of racial justice and equity, with many of these protests targeted directly at officers themselves.[47] It is now more important than ever to listen to the sworn and nonsworn personnel in the agency and assess their needs.

Personnel who are hesitant to engage in wellness programming. In agencies experiencing recruitment and retention challenges, one problem that can arise is the hesitancy to engage with agency wellness programming. Officers have historically been hesitant to participate in wellness programming for several reasons, including fear of reprisal or the notion that seeking services will act as a barrier to promotion,[48] cultural stigmas about seeking mental health services,[49] and the inability to identify their need for help.[50]

APD Blue Chip Program:[51] APD identified early on during the pandemic that, aside from the concern about their officers' physical safety, the mental health aspect was a challenge for officers because of the increased operational tempo. Fortunately, APD did not have to build a new mental health program during the crisis because the agency had already established a wellness program called the Blue Chip program, in which all employees are given a blue poker chip that grants them unlimited free services from several mental health providers. According to the agency's website, "the department participates in anonymous billing with each provider, so employee records are never shared with the department."[52] In

May 2021, the agency received federal funding from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) for the Blue Chip program.

Opportunities for training are a challenge.[53,54] In agencies experiencing recruitment and retention challenges, one problem that can arise is the inability to attend training opportunities due to the lack of patrol coverage. Through BJA's Violence Against Law Enforcement Officers and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability (VALOR) Initiative, CNA interviewed officers from four agencies to learn about their perceptions of agency training and officer safety. Officers noted that the topics covered in trainings pertaining to officer safety included but were not limited to firearms, pistol qualifications, defensive tactics, tactical driving, and use of force.

A more senior officer noted that they felt the newer officers would be safer if they were more confident and better able to regulate their emotions. This officer recommended mindfulness training to make sure people can regulate their emotions in times of stress, and to ensure the agency deploys more confident officers who can de-escalate situations with patience. Multiple officers also recommended that officers become more proficient with hands-on control like Jiu Jitsu or other control tactics.[55]

Related to this, one key component of the Performance and Recovery Optimization (PRO) program, an evidence-based wellness program for law enforcement officers that has been implemented in the **San Antonio Police Department** and the **Bexar County Sheriff's Office** in Texas and recognized by IACP and the Department of Justice, is the use of the Psychological Skills Inventory for Law Enforcement (PSI-LE). This validated tool measures skill domains including combat breathing, muscle control, attention management, mental practice, self-talk, physical and mental recharge, and winning mindset.[56] Together, this assessment provides key information to officers and their agencies to gauge the extent to which officers utilize psychological skills and strategies to manage stress, an important factor for determining the success and impact of mental resiliency programs.

Identifying Appropriate Supervision. In agencies experiencing recruitment and retention challenges, one problem that can arise is a lack of appropriate supervision. The role of the front-line supervisor is vital to officer wellness, police accountability, and officer retention. The importance of using evidence-based practices in the selection, training, and evaluation of supervisors cannot be overemphasized. Across the nation, particularly during the recruitment and retention crisis, sergeants have been assigned disproportionate amounts of responsibility.[57] Whether sergeants are supervising double the number of officers or overseeing double the number of districts, this can prevent them from fulfilling their normal roles of encouraging the officers they supervise to utilize the provided wellness resources. This can also pose a barrier to supervisors being able to take time off.

Recruitment and retention challenges at the supervisor level also impact the patrol staff. In CNA's assessment of SJPD, we learned that while SJPD officers were facing collective burnout, some of the sergeants we spoke to noted they did not "have it as bad as the patrol." One sergeant stated, "The main issue is the staffing . . . I think it's crushing morale because folks are getting burnt out." Officers interviewed in virtual focus groups expressed frustration at "bidding for a supervisor" and then the sergeant being moved around after being in place for a period of time on a specific shift.

Developing an EIS. In agencies experiencing recruitment and retention challenges, one problem that can arise is the inability of supervisors to productively engage with the agency's EIS. An EIS is a tool that many agencies use to identify potentially problematic employees who are at risk of an adverse event. Although no two EISs across the nation are identical, the underlying concept behind them remains consistent: certain officers demonstrate characteristics that are associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing an adverse event. To avoid such events and to address the underlying behavior, the officer receives supervisor intervention in the form of coaching, referral to the employee assistance program, or other remediation efforts.

In the recent BJA workshop, "Building American Law Enforcement's Future: Seizing Opportunity In The Current Recruitment And Retention Crisis," a panelist noted that agencies need to develop and implement EISs that incorporate symptoms of burnout and look for signs of change in behavior. Officers also have requested more support from their EISs, noting desires to monitor individuals working

PROACTIVE EARLY WARNING SUPPORTS FOR OFFICERS: BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT

The **Baltimore Police Department** in Maryland has made officer wellness and early intervention a priority. A number of paragraphs included in the 2017 Consent Decree for the Department referenced the use of EISs to better support officers and improve community outcomes. The agency has embraced this reform under Vernon Herron, Director of Safety and Wellness for the Department. The Department actively engages with recruits and officers to make them aware of the stresses and signs of trauma and provides proactive, trauma-informed supports to identify, mitigate, and address trauma in officers. The data system includes information on use of force and disciplinary issues for an officer but also uses roll-call punctuality and court appearance tardiness. While the former data points could indicate recurring or long-standing issues with officers, the latter data points are designed for supervisors to engage with an officer before detrimental impacts occur for the officer or community. Additional supports include peer support teams, access to gyms in every district, and access to emotional support animals.[1] Collectively, these supports provide the agency with real-time information on the wellbeing and warning signs of their officers.

Source: Crawford Coates, 2022, Baltimore PD: Putting Officer Wellness First, CORDICO, retrieved September 19, 2022 from https://www.cordico.com/2021/06/24/baltimore-pd-putting-officer-wellness-first/[58]

overtime to ensure they are not under financial stress, preventing timesheet fraud by catching the issue early on, and tracking secondary employment.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

Sworn and nonsworn policing professionals have high-stress jobs and have noted burnout as a reason for departures from their organizations. To accommodate the high-stress environments that criminal justice system professionals experience, agencies must develop wellness programming and supports for their personnel. For agencies that are unsure of where to begin, they should consider taking the following actions:

Assessing the agency's wellness programming. Developing wellness programs for law enforcement agencies can be challenging because departmental needs will differ based on the department's morale, leadership, job tasks, community relationships, and history. As a result, many agencies become overwhelmed and have difficulties with initiating what appears to be a daunting task. CNA developed an assessment tool for agencies based on a nationally recognized and science-driven law enforcement wellness approach developed by clinical psychologists for law enforcement—the PRO model.[59] PRO incorporates six critical elements of wellness in one comprehensive package—tactical, mental, physical, spiritual, social, and financial (Figure 4). PRO™ treats the officer as a "tactical athlete" and improves performance and resilience using a systems approach and by instilling practices for use at work and home. Agencies can complete the online assessment[60] and your agency will be

provided with a score in each PRO area along with tailored methods and resources to immediately implement improvements.

Developing EISs to identify officers at higher risk for adverse events and poor wellness outcomes and providing appropriate counseling, training, or other interventions. It is commonly heard in law enforcement that an EIS is a way to quantify what everyone in the agency already knew was happening. In the recent BJA workshop, "Building American Law Enforcement's Future: Seizing Opportunity In The Current Recruitment And Retention Crisis," a retired officer noted that his agency knew who was suffering and having problems, and it is the responsibility of leadership to communicate to officers when they may not be the right fit for the job. To help retain their employees before misconduct reaches a level that requires termination, agencies must develop and use their EIS. Sworn personnel have expressed a desire for improved capabilities in their agencies' EIS to flag problematic behaviors ahead of a serious offense, which could in turn save an officer's job. To avoid being perceived as a disciplinary response, an agency should consider whether their EIS should be housed in Internal Affairs (IA) or in another unit. Given that an EIS is meant to provide support for the agency member, housing the system within IA could attach a negative stigma to the program. Agencies developing an EIS should collaborate with stakeholders, including the union and sworn members of all ranks, during the development and review of their EIS. Consistent and reliable measures of how officers and supervisors are

Figure 4. Elements of a Comprehensive Officer Wellness Program

Tactical   Mental   Physical   Spiritual   Social   Financial

experiencing the new system and (once sufficient data has been collected) where the desired outcomes are being achieved are also important.

Developing a Peer Support Program. To address the adverse impacts of stress, some law enforcement agencies have developed peer support or mentoring programs. These programs provide officers with training to identify mental health warning signs, offer support to their peers, and refer them to professional services if necessary. Peer support programs serve as mental health force multipliers for agencies with limited capacities to expand comprehensive mental wellness programs. Leveraging peer support and mentoring options allows departments to mitigate the severity of consequences related to the stressors that officers face and to strengthen officers' effectiveness in serving the community.
Nationwide, peer support programs differ in structure, ranging from formal and vetted suicide-prevention programs staffed by officers with extensive training to volunteer programs responding only to critical incidents. A national survey found that peer support programs are the most commonly implemented proactive mental health strategy among law enforcement agencies.[61] The "cop-to-cop" model allows officers to discuss sensitive topics with peers who have had similar experiences, and it bolsters participants' trust in peer support programs.[62] Law enforcement agencies often implement peer support programs

to help officers address their behavioral health needs before they require medical intervention or experience a mental health crisis that could result in a service weapon revocation.[63]

The COPS Office grant, the **Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) Program,** improves the delivery of and access to mental health and wellness services for law enforcement through the implementation of peer support, training, family resources, suicide prevention, and other promising practices for wellness programs. The LEMHWA Program funds projects that develop knowledge, increase awareness of effective mental health and wellness strategies, increase the skills and abilities of law enforcement, and increase the number of law enforcement agencies and relevant stakeholders using peer support, training, family resources, suicide prevention, and other promising practices for wellness programs.

Surveying personnel to ensure organizations are meeting the wellness needs of their staff and implementing other evaluations of processes and impacts. Agencies should ensure they are being responsive to the wellness needs of their staff, and one way they can accomplish this is through routine surveys or focus groups to compare the staff needs with agency programming. As with all other wellness initiatives, it is important that all members of the department are queried, including but not limited to 911 professionals (dispatchers), professional staff, command, and chiefs. Additionally, to supplement the information gathered from focus groups and ensure actions are taken from the information provided in these groups, an agency should conduct an internal survey, ideally with an outside research partner, to study the specific mental health challenges that their sworn and nonsworn personnel are experiencing. Then the agency can work with a research partner to develop a customized plan following evidence-based practices that could help it be more responsive to its members.

Conclusions

While the challenges regarding recruitment and retention of high-performing police officers discussed in this report are not new to law enforcement, they have been exacerbated and compounded by recent trends and issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, increases in violent crime, and waning trust in police as the result of a series of civilian deaths at the hands of police officers. Maintaining the integrity and stability of the policing profession is as important now as it ever was. This report offers a series of approaches and recommendations, largely informed by innovative and thoughtful changes within the profession itself, for decreasing these recruitment and retention challenges and improving the policing profession.

The broad themes of equity and fairness, process review and improvement, and officer wellness weave throughout the problem descriptions and local agency insights found in this report. Police agencies should improve the ways in which they increase the diversity of the workforce, and there are several important dimensions of workforce diversity to consider—for example, racial and ethnic diversity, gender diversity, and diversity of life experiences. It is also important for police agencies to reflect on and improve the internal procedural justice within their agencies if they hope to recruit young people into the workforce and retain them for more than a few years.

There are several areas in police operations and administration that should improve, in terms of equity and efficiency, in the pursuit of more successful recruitment and retention. The notion of screening applicants in, rather than screening them out is an example of the recommended type of innovative thinking. Police recruit screening processes should be reviewed and revised with an equity lens, and law enforcement should rethink the educational requirements for police officer applicants (allowing life or work experience to substitute for college credits, for example). Officer performance evaluation processes and early warning or early intervention processes also need rethinking, especially to guard against overly punitive practices.

Attending to officer health and wellness in a myriad of ways—for example, recognizing the impact of repeated stress and post-traumatic stress, destigmatizing help-seeking behaviors, and addressing the impacts of stress and trauma on police officers' family members—stand out as important considerations regarding improving long-term retention of high-performing police officers.

While the magnitude of the recruitment and retention problem in policing looks daunting, as the information and evidence presented here indicates, individuals and agencies need not feel they must solve all problems at once, nor should they feel that they must walk this path alone. This report contains a number of examples from agencies that have implemented new approaches and revised recruitment and retention practices.

It is also important to recognize that the ideas and innovations suggested in this report are not all proven, tested, and based on systematic research and evaluation. Some of them are grounded in the reality of everyday policing and everyday police administration and represent thoughtful approaches to a growing problem. As SPI stresses, and as many police departments across the country practice, implementation of the approaches and ideas suggested in this report should be evaluated through rigorous assessment methods. In that way, we will continue to build a solid, science-based body of evidence regarding policing in the United States.

Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Law Enforcement Agencies

PRINCIPLE 1: EFFECTIVE AND EQUITABLE APPROACHES TO EXPAND THE POOL OF OFFICER CANDIDATES

Understand Your Community.	Assess the community your department is serving to understand the diversity of its population and its expectations for the police department. Identify ways for the community to help with recruitment and make the hiring process transparent to community members.
Gather Data on Trends in Recruitment Practices and Demographics of Candidate Applicants.	Agencies should implement a system or database to track applications and applicant progress through the hiring process and analyze this data annually to identify racial, ethnic, or gender-based disparities at each stage of the hiring process. Agencies should also use these systems to inform recruiting practices by understanding the strategies and engaged communities during recruitment campaigns. If such disparities are identified in recruitment practices or in the pool of candidates that apply, the agency should investigate the root causes and, if possible, implement programs to ameliorate those disparities.
Portray Policing Accurately in Recruitment Materials.	Social media, popular television shows and movies, and some agency recruiting materials focus on stylized enforcement and paramilitary aspects of officer activities. However, many individuals are less familiar with officers' day-to-day interactions with the community and problem-solving activities. As a result, agencies should consider recruitment campaigns that accurately portray the reality of police work.
Address DEI in Your Department.	It is important for the community to see their police department is addressing DEI and making changes, particularly after the George Floyd killing. To begin addressing DEI, LAPD undertook several initiatives; instituted an equity and inclusion policy, maternity accommodations, an anti-discrimination policy, and a sexual harassment policy; and assigned a high-ranking DEI officer. These efforts have resulted in greater diversity in the officer candidate pool and an increased number of women and individuals of color serving on the force.

Provide Support for Retaining Women Officers.

Creating a formalized leadership and mentoring program for underrepresented women police officers is one way to provide support. Systematic internal assessments of why women are leaving departments, conversations with patrol staff about causes of the problem, creation of policies that enable women to balance work and family life, and promotion of women into positions of leadership may also increase retention among women officers.

Consider Ways to Attract Recruits from a Range of Backgrounds, Demographics, and Even Other Professions.

Police agencies must re-align strategies to attract a workforce that reflects the values and composition of the communities they serve. Diversity is more than the number of officers that represent specific demographics such as race, ethnicity, age, and gender. Recruiting strategies should generally reflect the various communities that an agency serves. However, diversity can and should also include nontraditional perspectives in law enforcement, such as individuals that enter the field from other professions.

PRINCIPLE 2: IDENTIFICATION OF THE BEST CANDIDATES DURING SCREENING AND SELECTION

Develop tailored and equitable recruitment content and approaches to attract and expand the pool of diverse and appropriate applicants.

Agencies must tailor their recruitment marketing strategies to the communities they are looking to attract. Across the country, agencies are launching marketing campaigns to recruit officers, but it is critical that these campaigns are not designed to continue business as usual, but to attract quality candidates with the skill sets of the 21st-century police officer. Partnering with a subject matter expert or marketing firm is one important part of executing this strategy. However, agency leadership must be careful to include their communities' voices as well to learn what their community is looking for from their officers and to effectively launch and execute these campaigns.

Consider screening procedures that incorporate positive traits and characteristics for the job.

In a study that Dr. Michael White conducted with the GPD, officers were asked to identify the five most important personality traits, characteristics, and skills they would seek from their applicant pool, in addition to identifying the processes that police departments could use to find people with these hallmarks. Officers in the study suggested that agencies: (1) use mental, physical, and technical fitness tests that are usually reserved for academy training; (2) use dual-purpose processes to screen candidates "in" and "out"; (3) use role-playing scenarios and scenario-based testing to identify traits such as integrity, honesty, compassion, communication, and listening skills; (4) conduct multiple face-to-face interviews that are in-depth and open-ended; and (5) practice proactive recruitment strategies.,

Practice proactive recruiting and intentional screening to target the hallmarks your agency is seeking.

Agencies should proactively seek out diverse applicants through partnerships with historically diverse colleges such as Hispanic-Serving Institutions and HBCUs[64] and create strong community outreach practices.[65] Agencies should also implement a system or database to track applications and applicant progress through the hiring process and analyze this data annually to identify racial, ethnic, or gender-based disparities at each stage of the hiring process. If such disparities are identified, the agency should investigate the root causes and, if possible, implement programs to ameliorate those disparities.

Ensure your agency is attracting the right candidates by promoting a positive culture.

Attracting members of the community to join a justice system profession that is not known for high salaries or low-stress work environments can be difficult. One way that agencies can work to attract qualified and desired candidates is by exemplifying a procedurally just culture in which the applicant will want to work. While other agencies struggled with recruitment during the COVID-19 pandemic, numbers at APD increased. APD believes its culture reflects and integrates the increasingly reform-oriented values of young people who may previously have been reluctant to apply based on their negative perceptions of the police culture. APD points to these principles as one of the reasons the Department has been able to maintain a positive relationship with its community and a key factor in the recruitment and retention of officers. This anecdotal evidence is further supported by research that indicates that individuals considering a career in law enforcement are more likely to apply when presented with recruitment materials that emphasize procedural justice principles.

PRINCIPLE 3: RETENTION OF OFFICERS WHO REFLECT THE VALUES OF THE AGENCY AND COMMUNITY WITH ACCOUNTABILITY AND PROMOTION PROCESSES

Identify Your Agency's Core Values and Build Upon Those Values Through Evaluation and Promotion Systems.

Many agencies develop 3- or 5-year strategic plans that operationalize core values for the agency. These documents provide a clear vision for your agency in key areas such as community engagement and transparency as well as goals and policing strategies that the agency plans to implement.

Build and implement a human resource strategy that fits within your agency.

It is important to consider how all of your systems, including recruitment, training, and promotions, play a role in the overall strategy and culture your agency is trying to develop or maintain. Performance systems can reflect those values in the elements included in evaluations, such as community interactions, adherence to policies, self-initiated activities, etc.

Retain your staff by investing in systems that encourage and promote best practices.

Performance and training systems should be a part of continuous feedback on performance and outcomes that command staff and officer receive on a regular basis. These systems can help to identify and assist those in need of support as well as provide regular interactions on job performance. The best evaluation systems include regular feedback to correct potentially problematic behavior while also giving an opportunity to encourage behaviors that the agency would like to see in all of its officers. Use of annual or semi-annual evaluations alone provide fewer opportunities to give this formative feedback.

Surveying personnel to ensure organizations are meeting the wellness needs of their staff and implementing other evaluations of processes and impacts.

Agencies should ensure they are being responsive to the wellness needs of their staff, and one way they can accomplish this is through routine surveys or focus groups to compare the staff needs with agency programming. As with all other wellness initiatives, it is important that all members of the department are queried, including but not limited to 911 professionals (dispatchers), professional staff, command, and chiefs. Additionally, to supplement the information gathered from focus groups and ensure actions are taken from the information provided in these groups, an agency should conduct an internal survey, ideally with an outside research partner, to study the specific mental health challenges that their sworn and nonsworn personnel are experiencing. Then the agency can work with a research partner to develop a customized plan following evidence-based practices that could help it be more responsive to its members.

PRINCIPLE 4: DEVELOPMENT OF OFFICER WELLNESS SYSTEMS TO BETTER SERVE OFFICERS AND COMMUNITIES

Assessing the agency's wellness programming.

Developing wellness programs for law enforcement agencies can be challenging as departmental needs will differ based on the department's morale, leadership, job tasks, community relationships, and history. As a result, many agencies become overwhelmed and have difficulties with initiating what appears to be a daunting task. CNA developed an assessment tool for agencies based on a nationally recognized, science-driven law enforcement wellness approach developed by clinical psychologists for law enforcement—the PRO™ model. PRO™ incorporates six critical elements of wellness in one comprehensive package: tactical, mental, physical, spiritual, social, and financial. PRO™ treats the officer as a "tactical athlete" and improves performance and resilience using a systems approach and by instilling practices for use at work and home. Agencies can complete the online assessment and will receive a score in each PRO area, along with tailored methods and resources to immediately implement improvements.

Developing EISs to Identify Officers at Higher Risk for Adverse Events and Poor Wellness Outcomes and Providing Appropriate Counseling, Training, or Other Interventions.

It is commonly heard in law enforcement that an EIS is a way to quantify what everyone in the agency already knew was happening. In the recent BJA workshop, "Building American Law Enforcement's Future: Seizing Opportunity in The Current Recruitment And Retention Crisis," a retired officer noted that his agency knew who was suffering and having problems, and it is the responsibility of leadership to communicate to officers when they may not be the right fit for the job. To help retain their employees before misconduct reaches a level that requires termination, agencies must develop and use their EIS. Sworn personnel have expressed a desire for improved capabilities in their agencies' EIS to flag problematic behaviors ahead of a serious offense, which could in turn save an officer's job. To avoid being perceived as a disciplinary response, an agency should consider whether their EIS should be housed in IA or in another unit. Given that an EIS is meant to provide support for the agency's members, housing the system within IA could attach a negative stigma to the program. Agencies developing an EIS should collaborate with stakeholders, including the union and sworn members of all ranks, during development and review of their EIS. Consistent and reliable measures of how officers and supervisors are experiencing the new system and (once sufficient data has been collected) where desired outcomes are achieved are also important.

Developing a Peer Support Program.

To address the adverse impacts of stress, some law enforcement agencies have developed peer support or mentoring programs. These programs provide officers with training to identify mental health warning signs, offer support to their peers, and refer them to professional services if necessary. Peer support programs serve as mental health force multipliers for agencies with limited capacities to expand comprehensive mental wellness programs. Leveraging peer support and mentoring options allows departments to mitigate the severity of consequences related to the stressors that officers face and to strengthen officers' effectiveness in serving the community.

Nationwide, peer support programs differ in structure, ranging from formal and vetted suicide-prevention programs staffed by officers with extensive training to volunteer programs responding only to critical incidents. A national survey found that peer support programs are the most commonly implemented proactive mental health strategy among law enforcement agencies. The "cop-to-cop" model allows officers to discuss sensitive topics with peers who have had similar experiences, and it bolsters participants' trust in peer support programs. Law enforcement agencies often implement peer support programs to help officers address their behavioral health needs before they require medical intervention or experience a mental health crisis that could result in a service weapon revocation.

Surveying Personnel to Ensure Organizations are Meeting the Wellness Needs of Their Staff and Implementing Other Evaluations of Processes and Impacts.

Agencies should ensure they are being responsive to the wellness needs of their staff. One way they can accomplish this is through routine surveys or focus groups to compare staff needs with agency programming. As with all other wellness initiatives, it is important that all members of the department are queried, including but not limited to 911 professionals (dispatchers), professional staff, command, and chiefs. Additionally, to supplement the information gathered from focus groups and ensure actions are taken from the information provided in these groups, agencies should conduct an internal survey, ideally with an outside research partner, to study the specific mental health challenges that their sworn and nonsworn personnel are experiencing. Then, the agency can work with a research partner to develop a customized plan using evidence-based practices that could help it be more responsive to its members.

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